

# SERVICE DOGS OF VA – SPECIAL USE PERMIT

TMP 48-61D

SPECIAL USE PERMIT (SP 2023-00011 & 2023-00013)

RIVANNA DISTRICT

## NARRATIVE AND APPLICATION PLAN

Submission Date: August 21, 2023

Revised: December 4, 2023

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Project Narrative

The applicant, Service Dogs of Virginia (SDV) is seeking (2) two special use permits for the property TMP48-61D, in northern Albemarle County along Turkey Sag Road (Route 640) east of Stony Point Road. Service Dogs of Virginia (SDV) is requesting a special use permit on the 38.8-acre property (which is located in the Rural area) for a small private school dedicated to training service dogs and their recipients, and a special use permit for the dog kennels needed to house the dogs in advanced training.

SDV was founded in 2000 and has always been in Albemarle County. They are one of (3) accredited service dog schools in the Commonwealth. The accreditation (by Assistance Dogs International) ensures that SDV trains their dogs to the highest standards and has systems in place for the ethical treatment of their clients. SDV is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, governed by a Board of Directors. Although they use dogs to assist people with disabilities, they do not consider themselves as a “dog organization” but rather a human services organization.

Service Dogs of Virginia serves a very underserved population (people with disabilities) in a unique way. A well-trained service dog can give someone with a disability greater freedom and a higher quality of life. SDV serves people in 5 program areas: physical assistance (primarily people in wheelchairs); children and young adults on the

autism spectrum; medical alert for health issues with a recognizable odor-type 1 diabetes, low cortisol, and mast cell activation syndrome; PTSD for military and first responders; and facility dogs for counselors and law enforcement personnel who work with people experiencing trauma. Their clients come from all over Virginia, and they do not place dogs out of state.

SDV needs a dedicated facility so that they can do their work with greater efficiency and reduce the waiting list. Over the last 23 years, they have occupied retail and office spaces that are not ideally suited to their needs. They have not had a kennel for dogs in advanced training and rely on volunteers to take dogs home each night and on weekends. Some of their volunteers have taken up to 6 dogs home at a time, which is not sustainable, efficient, or desirable.

Service Dogs of Virginia is a member of an international breeding cooperative that breeds dogs exclusively for service and guide dog work, but they are not able to whelp a litter at their current facility. This reduces the number of dogs they can obtain that will have the greatest chance of success.

The proposed kennel building with this special use permit request is designed to house dogs in advanced training with a maximum of 20 dogs in the kennel at a time. The kennel includes a separate space for female dogs to isolate the breeding females when they are in heat. This portion of the kennel building is designed to house 4 dogs. A small respite kennel would also be included under the same roof of the proposed dog kennel and would be utilized if a dog is sick and needs to be isolated, and also if a puppy raiser needs respite care or if no volunteers are available. The winter holidays are a time that many people need respite care at the same time and a kennel will help us with the difficulty of housing dogs when people travel. A small pool is planned for the kennel building for the purpose of exercising dogs each day. This level of exercise will help dog sleep quietly through the night. The proposed kennel is located on the upper campus area of the site and will be located a minimum of 500 feet from all property lines.

The puppy center, located on the lower campus of the site would house a female and her litter for an 8-week period only. This space gives the SDV the capacity to provide an enrichment center for early development. The puppy center will have room for two simultaneous litters, allowing for the growth of the SDV breeding program. In comparison, the SDV program currently has 1 to 2 litters a year,

Service Dogs of Virginia does not charge clients for their dog. They rely on donations from individuals and businesses. SDV also receives about 1/5 of our revenue from foundation grants. They do not receive any state or federal support and no insurance provides funding for service dogs. SDV has always believed that money should not be an obstacle to independence. This is one of the main reasons they want to be able to house their clients on campus when they are learning to work with their dog. The proposed guest rooms on the property will house only 4 clients at a time. Clients train for a 2-week period when they receive their dog. Having a place for people to stay will also help clients come back when they need support during the 8 to 10 years that they have had their service dog.

The Special Use permit application proposes a clustered campus facility on the property, with approximately 6 buildings on the 38.8-acres. These buildings are split between an upper-level building site on the property and a lower-level building site on the property. The upper building site shall include the dog kennel. This building site area meets the requirement for the kennels, with a 500 feet setback from adjacent property lines. In addition, on the upper building site there will be the kennel manager’s house and a training facility. On the lower-level building site, (3) buildings are proposed, which include classrooms for the clients, a 4-person dorm for guests in the training

program, and the SDV administration building. Building sizes are small and clustered, fitting into the existing landscaping and terrain of the Rural area.

Service Dogs of Virginia provides a much-needed public benefit to the community. It provides a dependable and trustworthy training facility for service dogs, which is greatly needed for the community and surrounding areas in Virginia. They have been operating over the past 23 years and are looking to relocate and build a facility to continue to meet current and future public needs and demands in the area for a service dog.

**Hours of Operation:**

The SDV's proposed hours of operation are 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday, and closed for most Federal Holidays.

**Number of Kennels:**

Only one kennel building is proposed with this special use permit application. This building shall be located on the upper campus of the site and will meet the requirements of Section 5.1.11 of the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance. The kennel building will be a minimum of 500 feet from all property lines and the training dogs will be confined in the enclosed building from 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM, as required by the Albemarle County code. The proposed kennel will hold a maximum 20 dogs in the advance training program.

**Onsite Training Dog activities:**

The training dogs will be both run and walked around the site during the normal business day hours. The site will be completely fenced in for the safety of the dogs and so that they cannot stray onto anyone else's property. The training dogs will always be walked or run with supervision. The dogs may be outside on a walk or run during normal kennel hours of 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM. The perimeter activity areas for the training dogs to run and walk will remain wooded, except where the fencing will be installed. There is also an indoor pool proposed for the project with this special use permit that will be utilized by the training dogs between normal business hours of 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

**Soundproofing:**

All the buildings on the property will include soundproofing. This includes the dog kennel, puppy center, and other programing buildings on the property. This proposed soundproofing is above and beyond the soundproofing required by the County ordinance. If a kennel is 500 feet from the property line and the puppy center is 200 feet from the property line, then soundproofing is not required, per the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance. This proposal includes soundproofing on all buildings, even though the buildings shall meet these setback requirements.

**Sleeping Quarters:**

All training dogs shall sleep in the same kennel on the upper campus, except during the 8-week period of a new litter. The puppy center will include an area to house a female and her litter during this 8-week period only.

**Proposed Dorms:**

The dorms are proposed to be utilized approximately 5 times a year. Each training session lasts for a 2-week period (Monday through Friday). Based on this schedule, it is anticipated that the dorm will be utilized for approximately 50 days during each calendar year. The dorm shall house up to 4 clients at a time. A disabled client may require an aide and each room has a couch or roll away bed to accommodate an aide. A client may also bring a parent or spouse for support. A local client could attend training but would not be required to stay in the dorm during the evenings.

In addition, SDV encourages clients to receive ongoing training as necessary. The dorms will provide a place for the client to stay on campus that would help facilitate the additional training. This use would be sporadic and for only a night or two during the weekdays. No dorm use is anticipated during the weekends.

The time between the training classes will vary, depending on when the training dogs are ready for placement. The number of training classes a year will also vary, depending on how many dogs are in the training program and when they are ready.

**Well and Septic fields:**

There will be (2) wells and septic fields on the upper portion of the site and (2) wells and septic fields on the lower portion of the site. Each well/septic field shall serve a maximum of (2) buildings.

**Building Height and Building construction:**

The maximum building height of any structure on the property shall be 24 feet. See sheets 12 through 16 for information on the building design, materials and architecture.

**Landscaping, Buffers, and Existing Vegetation:**

The site is primarily wooded with a mixture of mature deciduous and evergreen trees. The tree sizes vary from 20 feet in height to 60 feet across the site. Clearing and land disturbance with this special use permit shall be limited to the construction of the gravel driveway, parking lots, stormwater management facilities, and building pads. No extensive clearing of an area on the site is proposed with this special use permit, other than for the required improvements for the uses. The site shall maintain perimeter vegetative buffer around the site. The buffer shall include a minimum 75' undisturbed buffer along Turkey Sag Road and a minimum 200' undisturbed buffer along all adjacent lot lines. The total acreage of the perimeter undisturbed buffer is 18 acres. See sheet 12 for a site section across the site.

**Staff Members:**

SDV currently has 5 staff members on the team. It is expected that the total staff will increase with this new facility. The estimated staff in the future, based on the proposed programing outlined with this special use permit is 10 staff members. This would include 5 trainers, 1 administrative personnel, 1 development director, 1 executive director, and 2 assistants.

**Driveway and Parking:**

The design of the driveway access to the facility from Turkey Sag Road and the parking lots shall mainly be gravel parking areas. The portion of the entrance within the VDOT right of way and a section of the driveway into the site will be paved to meet the VDOT entrance requirements and help prevent any gravel from washing onto Turkey Sag Road for the portion of the driveway within the stream buffer area. In addition, the location of the ADA accessible parking spaces shall the paved to allow for an ADA access route from the parking space to the buildings.

A parking study will be provided with the final site plan to determine the required parking for the site. "The parking study will take into account the number of employees, the number of client visitors at any given time on the site, and the operation of the facility. These factors will go into a parking analysis to determine and finalize the number of parking spaces for the site to be consistent with the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance.



## **1.2 Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan**

The property (TMP48-61D) is located within the Rural Area of Albemarle County, as shown on Figure 1 and Figure 2. Features of the Rural Area include protecting the natural resources, maintaining the rural and historic landscapes, and providing crossroads communities that have support services and opportunities to engage in community life. The characteristics of this special use permit fit in well with these goals and objectives of the Rural Area. The clustering of the campus style buildings for the project helps limit the impacts of the development on the property and preserve the natural elements of the site. The campus style design of the buildings allows for the buildings and site design to work with the natural contours of the property and preserve the natural resources and features on the site. Breaking up the massing with multiple buildings helps maintain the rural landscape of the area with smaller structures on the property that complement the character of the Rural Area. The construction of the buildings will not require full clearing of the buildable areas. The buildings will be erected on the site with minimal impacts to the existing trees and vegetation on the site. Finally, Services Dogs of Virginia provides a much-needed service that not only supports the local community but is much better suited in the rural areas where there is more room for the SDV to operate. The additional land within the Rural Area allows for space for training, exercising, and operating the business.

This special use permit request also meets many of the standards that are used to determine if a new use is compatible and consistent with the goals and characteristics of Rural Area land. The proposed dog kennel and training facility will have negligible impacts on the natural environmental features of the site. The required 500-foot setback for the kennels will help limit any negative effects with the nearby agricultural and forest uses in the area. In addition, the proposed 200-foot perimeter vegetative buffer around the site will help mitigate any impacts the proposed uses may have on the adjacent properties.

The campus style development will allow for small, clustered buildings that will fit in with the rural area characteristics with a size and scale that is consistent with the surrounding properties. The architecture and construction of the buildings will be residential in scale and design, giving the appearance of residential buildings on the property. Compared to the existing 5 development (division) rights on the property, the proposed design of the campus buildings with this special use permit will be less intensive than (5) residential homes with streets, driveways and yards across the site.

The proposed special use permit limits the development area to a couple of small areas (as shown on the Application Plan), while preserving the remaining natural land, thus allowing the property to be reversible, if necessary, and returned to Rural agricultural uses. Construction of the buildings will allow the removal or relocation of the buildings if the facility moves on to a different location. The design of the buildings and construction allow the transition of the foundations and building areas back to the rural nature of the property. Additional information on the construction of these buildings has been provided on sheets 12 through 16 of this application.

The proposed special use for the property will have minimal traffic impacts on the existing rural roads in the area, and very little demand for fire, rescue, and police service. During the community meeting for this special use permit, it was noted that the residents have seen an increase in traffic due to the farm wineries in the area. However, this proposed use should not affect this traffic, due to the hours of operation, which is only a weekday facility from 9am to 5pm.

The proposed uses will operate on wells and septic services and there is adequate available groundwater in the area. No more than two buildings shall be served by each well and septic field on the property, and the dog kennels shall have their own well and septic services for these buildings.

Overall, the proposed special use permit for the dog kennel and private training school is consistent with the standards and guidelines for new uses in the Rural Area as set for in the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan.

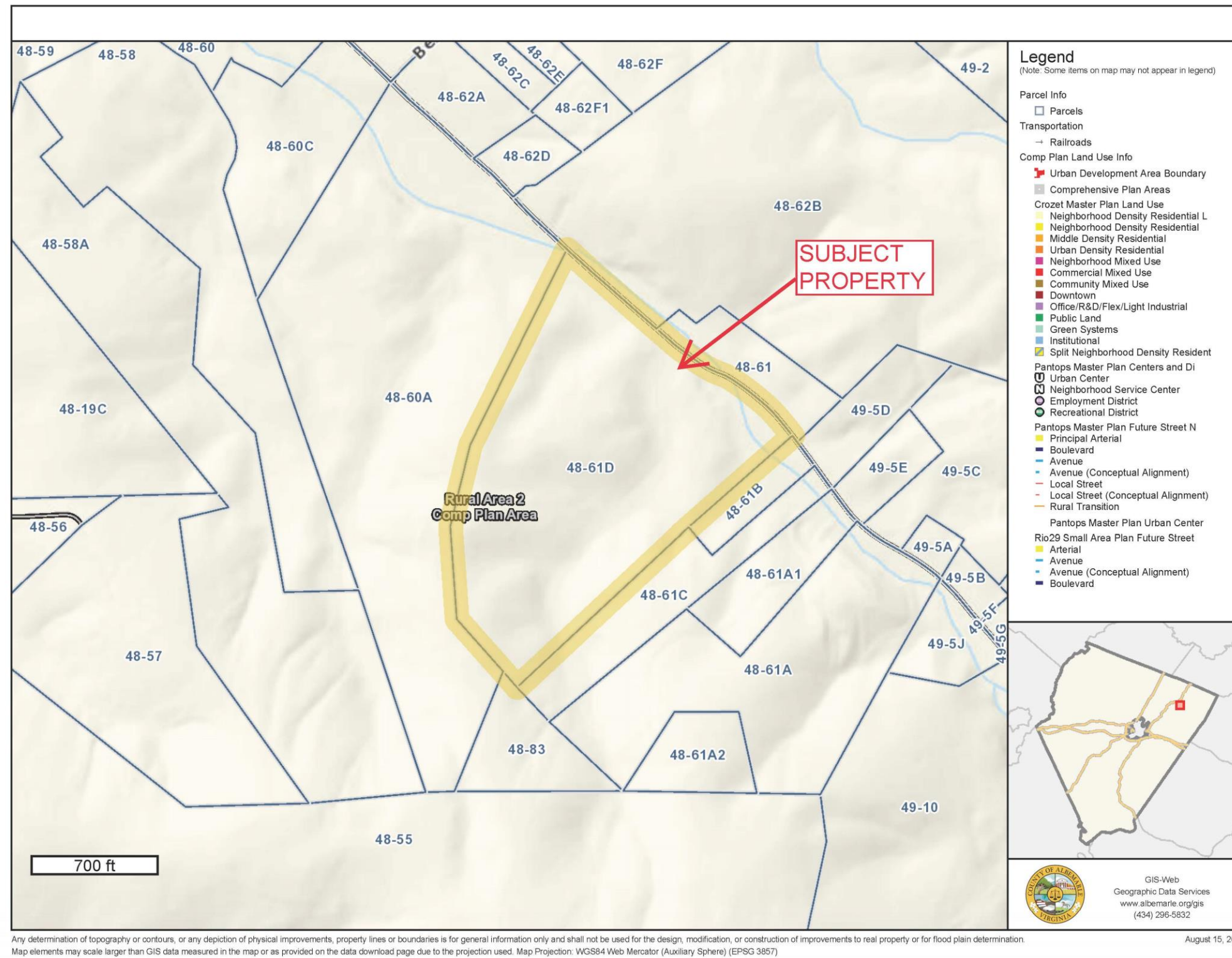
## **1.3 Existing Zoning & Special Use Permit– Rural Area**

Special use permits are allowed in the Rural Area under the Albemarle County Zoning ordinance for commercial dog kennels and private schools. The proposed Service Dogs of Virginia needs both special use permits to operate their facility in the Rural Area on this property. The commercial dog kennel shall also comply with section 5.1.11 of the Albemarle County Zoning ordinance. This section of the ordinance requires the commercial kennel to be located 500-feet from agricultural or residential lot lines (or 200-feet for soundproof confinements) and confining animals to enclosed buildings from 10:00 pm to 6:00 am. The final condition in this section does not apply to kennels within the Rural Area as proposed with this special use permit request.

The special use permit for a private school will allow for the training of the service dogs and the recipients on the property. Included with the private school are (4) guest rooms/dorm rooms for housing the recipients during the 2-week training period.

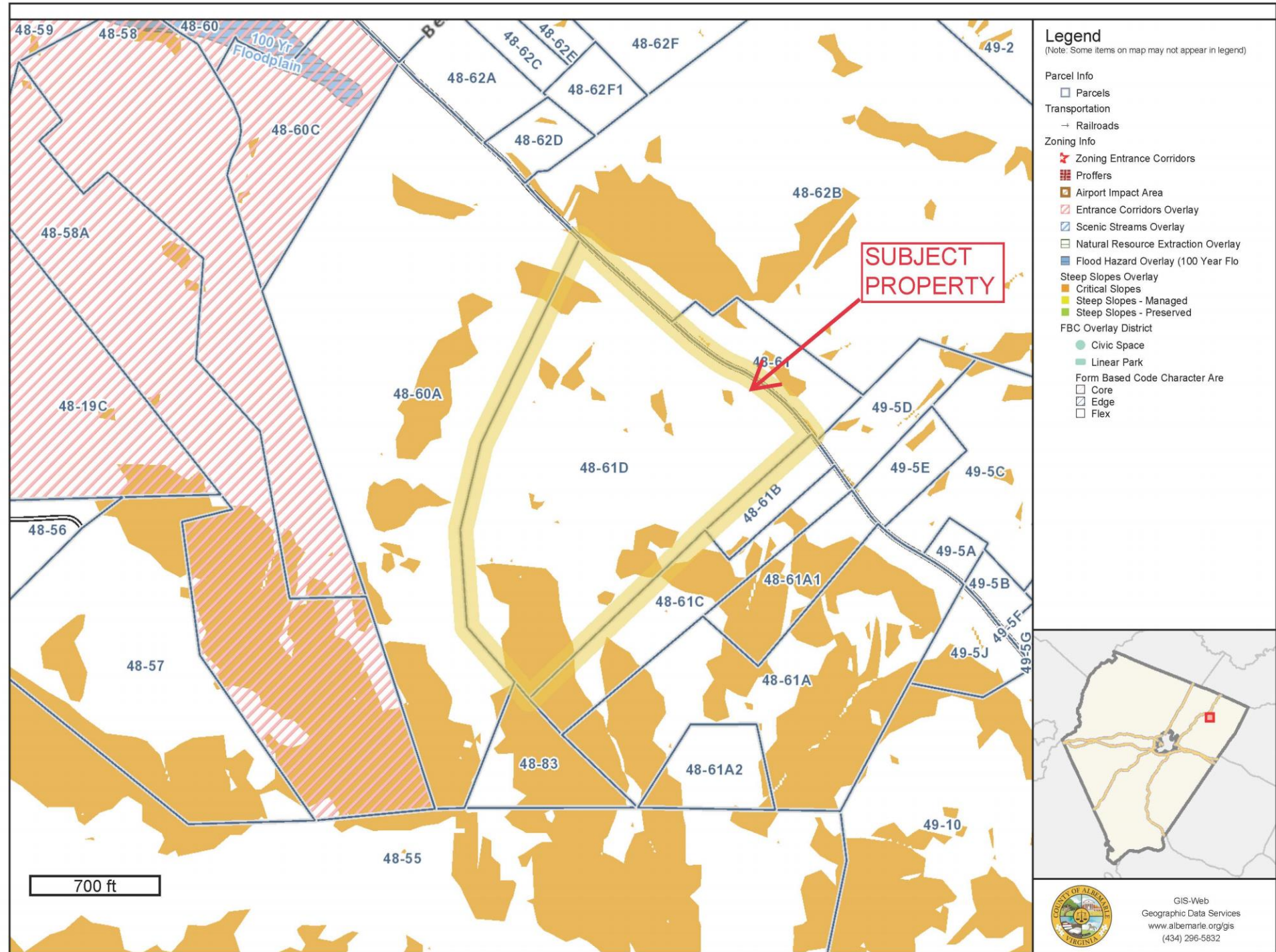
The development shall comply with the remaining requirements for development within the Rural area, including but not limited to setbacks, lot sizes, well and septic requirements, and building height requirements. The proposed development will meet Albemarle County water protection requirements, avoiding impacts to the natural resources on the property, including the stream buffers, critical slopes, and mountain overlay. There will be a small disturbance to the stream buffer for the entrance to the property with this application.

It is also worth noting that commercial dog kennels are only allowed in Albemarle County by special use permit in any zoning district. All dog kennels have to go through a special use permit process to ensure that the facility can function on a particular site in Albemarle County without negative impacts to the surrounding properties. This site is large enough for the proposed dog kennel to adhere to the requirements for kennels per the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance.



**Figure 1: Current Comprehensive Plan**





Any determination of topography or contours, or any depiction of physical improvements, property lines or boundaries is for general information only and shall not be used for the design, modification, or construction of improvements to real property or for flood plain determination. Map elements may scale larger than GIS data measured in the map or as provided on the data download page due to the projection used. Map Projection: WGS84 Web Mercator (Auxiliary Sphere) (EPSG 3857) August 15, 2023

**Figure 2: Current Zoning Map**



### 1.3 Existing Conditions

The subject property, as shown in Figure 3 on this page, is located along Turkey Sag Road (Route 640), just east of the intersection of Turkey Sag Road and Stony Point Road in northern Albemarle County. The parcel, which is primarily wooded, is 38.8 acres in size and is located within the Rural Area of Albemarle County. The property is bordered to the east by a residential parcel owned and maintained by the executive director of Service Dogs of Virginia and applicant of this special use permit. The property to the south and west is currently a tree farm with no current residences on the property. Turkey Sag Road borders to the north, along with an existing stream. On the other side of the roadway is one residence that also raises miniature donkeys and has horsed on the property. There is an existing stream buffer along the creek to the north of the property, but there is currently no floodplain along the stream per FEMA map 510006, Panel 325D, dated February 4, 2005.

The property will have access from Turkey Sag Road along the middle or western portion of the site to avoid a stream crossing on the property. There are no existing structures on the property. The topography of the subject property is sloped terrain from the back of the property down to Turkey Sag Road and the existing creek along the roadway. There is an existing mountain protection area on the property, as shown on Figure 4, that will not be disturbed with the proposed development. There is approximately 200 feet of elevation change from the back of the site to Route 640 and the creek.

The applicant is proposing to leave the majority of the site in the existing condition as a wooded forested area. The two development areas on the site and the access road are the only proposed disturbances for the property. The stream corridor, critical slopes, and mountain overlay will be preserved.

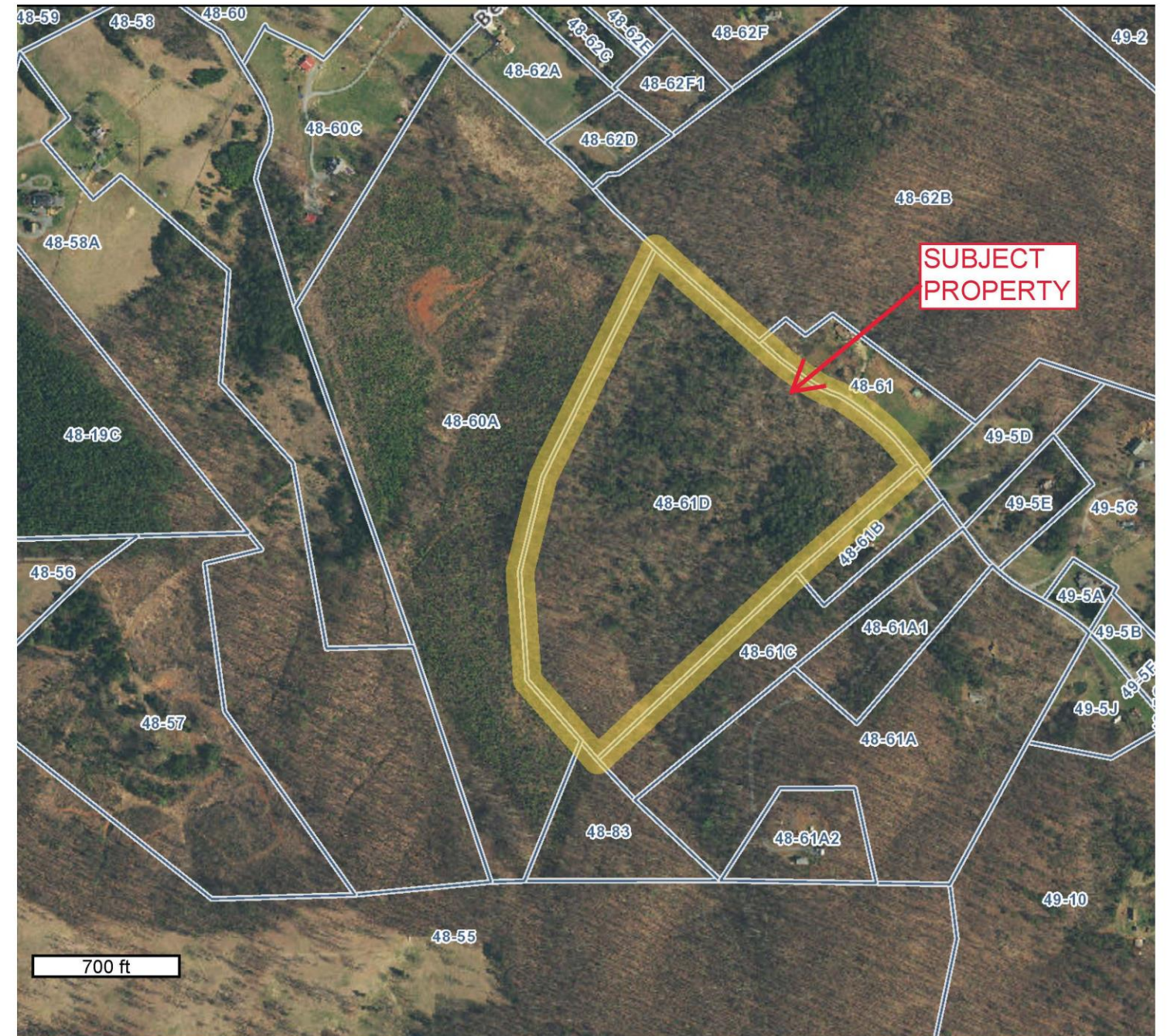


Figure 3: Overall Context Map



## 1.4 Development Impacts

As stated above, this property is located within the Albemarle County Rural area and will comply with the County ordinances and Virginia Department of Health requirements for well and septic requirements for the facility. There will be no more than (2) buildings connected to wells and the septic fields, and the drainfields and waste treatment from the dog kennels and dog training areas will be separated from the waste from the other facility buildings. A tier III water analysis will also be part of the final site plan design for the project. No development impacts are expected with the proposed wells and septic systems, based on the amount of conservation areas close by to the property.

The property is approximately 2.5 miles from the existing fire department station. No additional fire/rescue services are anticipated with this proposal.

There is only (1) residential unit proposed with this application, which will be the house for the caretaker on the property for the dog kennels. No impacts to the Albemarle County Public Schools are expected with the proposed special use permit application.

The parcel is located along Route 640 (Turkey Sag Road). The proposed application plan shows entrance improvements along the frontage of the site to maintain traffic flow in and out of the property. See the transportation narrative for additional information on the proposed traffic improvements for the property.

## 1.5 Environmental Impacts

Figure 4 illustrates the existing environmental features on the property. There is an existing stream buffer along Turkey Sag Road on the property. The stream is located on the north side of Turkey Sag Road for most of the frontage of the property but crosses over onto the property at the northeast corner of the property. The stream does not currently have a floodplain associated with it, based on the current FEMA maps. There will be a small impact to the stream buffer for the proposed entrance to the property from Turkey Sag Road. No other impacts are proposed to the stream buffer or stream corridor with this development.

There are several existing critical slopes on the property, based on the Albemarle County ordinance. The existing critical slopes will remain and no impacts to the critical slopes are proposed with the development of the property, see the application plan for more detail on the existing critical slopes on the property.

There is also a protected mountain overlay along the southern portion of the property. No development is proposed within this mountain protection overlay area, and it will be preserved with the development of the property.

Other than the small stream buffer impact for the entrance road, this development will have no environmental impacts to the natural features on the property.

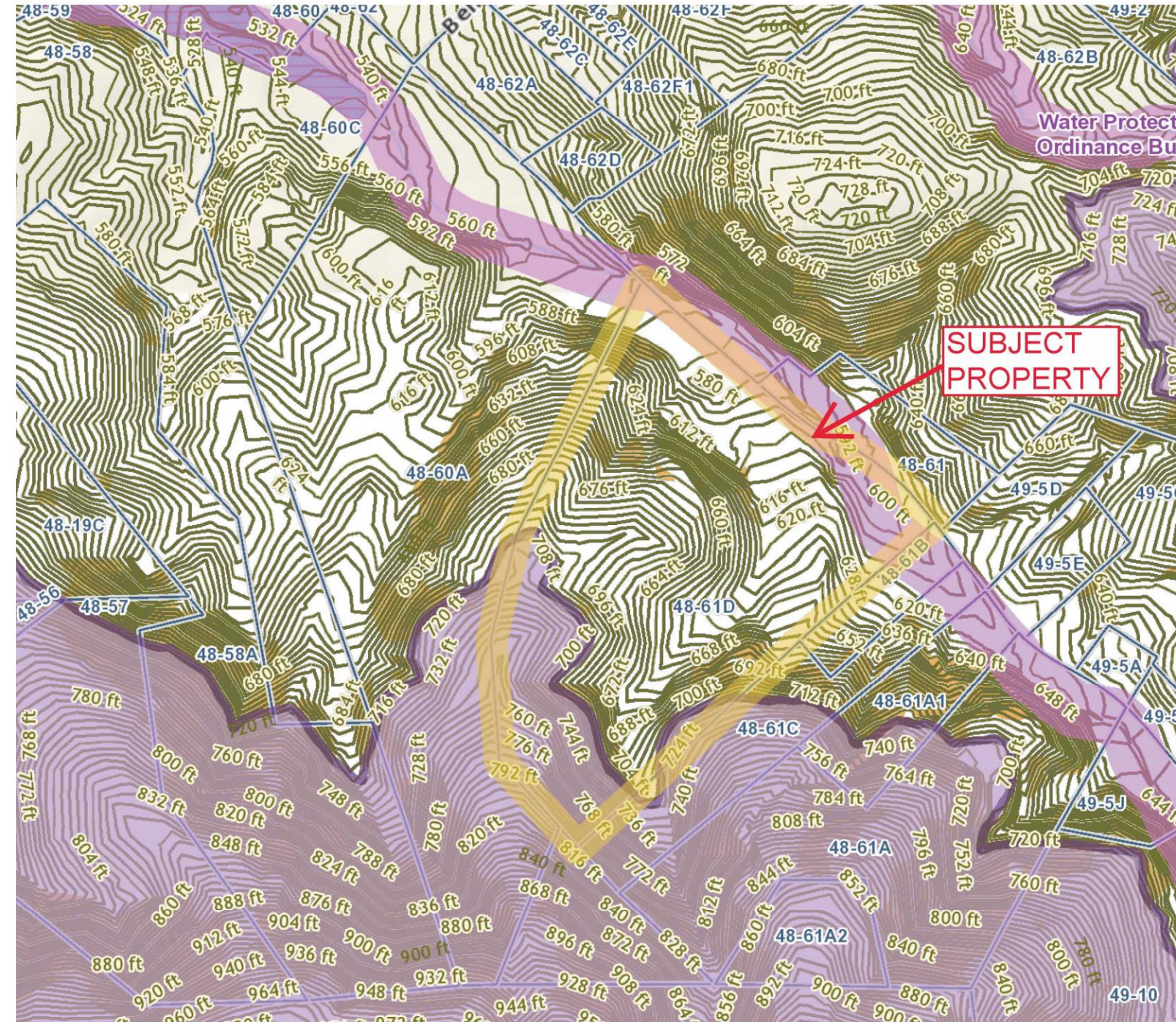


Figure 4: Critical Resource Map



## 2. DESIGN ELEMENTS & FACTORS FOR THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT

### 2.1 Traffic and Transportation Improvements

The property is located along Route 640 (Turkey Sag Road) which is a rural local roadway in Albemarle County. The current AADT volume of traffic on this portion of the roadway is approximately 180 VPD. There are very few residences along this portion of the road, as indicated with the very low trip counts. There are also no projected traffic counts in the ITE manual for dog kennels or training facilities for the service dogs. Therefore, the projected impact on the existing roads is based on the number of employees and volunteers for the business. The expected number of people each day for the proposed SDV business on the property is 8 to 10 employees and volunteers each day. With the proposed dorm/guest rooms associated with the training school, this will reduce trips associated with the clients during the dog training sessions. Expected traffic on the local road based on this data is approximately 20-30 trips a day for the proposed business. These additional trips will have a negligible impact on the existing transportation network. These proposed trips are also less than the by-right use of the property for (5) development (division) rights. Five residential homes on this site would generate approximately 45 trips per day. It was also noted that the traffic along this roadway has increased due to the warm wineries in the area. The proposed hours of operation of the kennel will not affect or add additional traffic to Turkey Sag Road during these peak times of traffic, typically on the weekends.

The application plan also shows the location of a commercial entrance onto Route 640 from the property. This entrance will meet the requirements of VDOT for a private business entrance onto a state-maintained roadway. VDOT will review and approve the final design for the entrance during the site plan review process.

### 2.2 Lighting

All proposed lighting on the property shall conform with the Albemarle County ordinance and shall be full-cutoff lighting, screened to the extent possible, and limited to 0.5 footcandles at the property lines. The final site plan will include a lighting plan for any proposed lighting on the property. Any new lighting proposed with the project will have an overnight automatic cut-off or motion-censored cut-off added to the light to mitigate the impact of the new light fixtures.

### 2.3 Water Usage

As noted above, the proposed business shall operate with a well and septic system. There will be multiple wells and septic systems on the property for the campus buildings and no more than 2 buildings will be connected to each system. A tier III water analysis will be provided with the final site plan requirements, and VDH approval is also required with the final site plan. There will also be a separate system for the dog waste from the kennels and training facilities.

### 2.4 Sounds & Smell

The proposed dog kennel shall comply with section 5.1.11 of the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance. This section of the code requires dog kennels without soundproof protection to be located 500 feet from the property lines. The Application plan and Illustrative plan on Sheet 9 and Sheet 10 show the 500-foot setback and the location of the dog kennels on the property. In addition, even though the kennels will meet the 500-foot setback requirements, soundproofing will be applied to all the buildings. With this extended setback, the sounds and smells from the dog kennels will have a negligible effect on the surrounding properties.

### 2.5 Visual Impacts and Building Design

The proposed buildings on the property will be designed in a clustered campus style design on the property, as shown on Sheet 10 - Application plan and Sheet 11 - Illustrative plan. The separate buildings will break up the massing and allow the buildings to fit in with the characteristics of the Rural Area.

### 2.6 Landscaping

All landscaping shall conform to the landscaping standards as specified in the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance Section 32.7.9. Street trees, screening, and interior landscaping shall be installed as required by Albemarle County for the proposed uses and landscaping requirements, per Section 32.7.9 of the Albemarle County Code for Landscaping and Screening requirements.

Screening and interior landscaping will be part of the final site plan to provide a visual barrier and help the proposed use to blend into the natural scenery of the Rural Area.

### 2.7 Grading

Grading of the site shall adhere to the existing topography on the property. The buildings, parking lots, and travelways shall be designed to work with the existing terrain of the property and limit grading operations on the site.

### 2.8 Stormwater Management

The proposed design and engineering for the development of the property shall adhere to the State Stormwater Management regulations and Albemarle County Water Protection Ordinance. The site will accommodate stormwater management with a combination of rain gardens, water quality swales, grass retention areas, land preservation, and/or other stormwater management features treat water quality and water quantity from the runoff. The final stormwater management design will be part of the site plan and water protection ordinance plan for the development. Landscape plantings will also be incorporated into the stormwater management facility.

Protective measures for erosion and sediment control shall be installed to limit any sediment run-off from reaching Route 640 and the existing stream during the construction phases. Additional measures may include, but not be limited to, installation of silt fence with wiring backing, providing additional wet and dry storage area in basins below the disturbed areas, or installation of erosion control matting for all slopes with the use of tackifiers in seeding and soil stabilization applications.

### 2.9 Summary

The approval of a special use permit for the dog kennels and private training school on the property for the Service Dogs of Virginia meets the factors and requirements as outlined in section 33.8 of the Albemarle County Code. As noted in the narrative, there is no substantial detriment to the surrounding properties with the proposed dog kennel and training facility on the property, nor are there any changes to the character of the nearby area with the development of the property. Design requirements and required setbacks ensure that the proposed clustered campus facility does not negatively impact the Rural Area. The proposed use is within harmony of the characteristics of the Rural Area, and the majority of the site will be preserved in the existing forested condition. Finally, the proposed use is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. This includes protecting the natural resources, maintaining the rural and historic landscapes, and providing crossroads communities that have support services and opportunities to engage in community life. Overall, the Service Dogs of Virginia is a great use for this property, and the relocation of the facility here will help the SDV expand and meet the current and future needs of service dogs in Virginia.